DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 452 536 CS 217 396

TITLE	Working with the School. Parents and Children Together Series.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Bloomington, IN.; Family Learning Association, Bloomington, IN.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
ISBN	ISBN-1-883790-79-4
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	87p.; Accompanying audiotape not available from ERIC. For other books in the series, see CS 217 390-399.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0028
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication, Indiana University, 2805 E. 10th Street, Suite 140, Bloomington, IN 47408-2698. Web site: http://eric.indiana.edu/. Family Learning Association, 3925 Hagan St., Suite 101, Bloomington, IN 47401.
PUB TYPE	Creative Works (030) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055) -- ERIC Publications (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Education; *Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; *Parent Student Relationship; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Reading Aloud to Others; *Reading Habits
IDENTIFIERS	School Team Approach

ABSTRACT

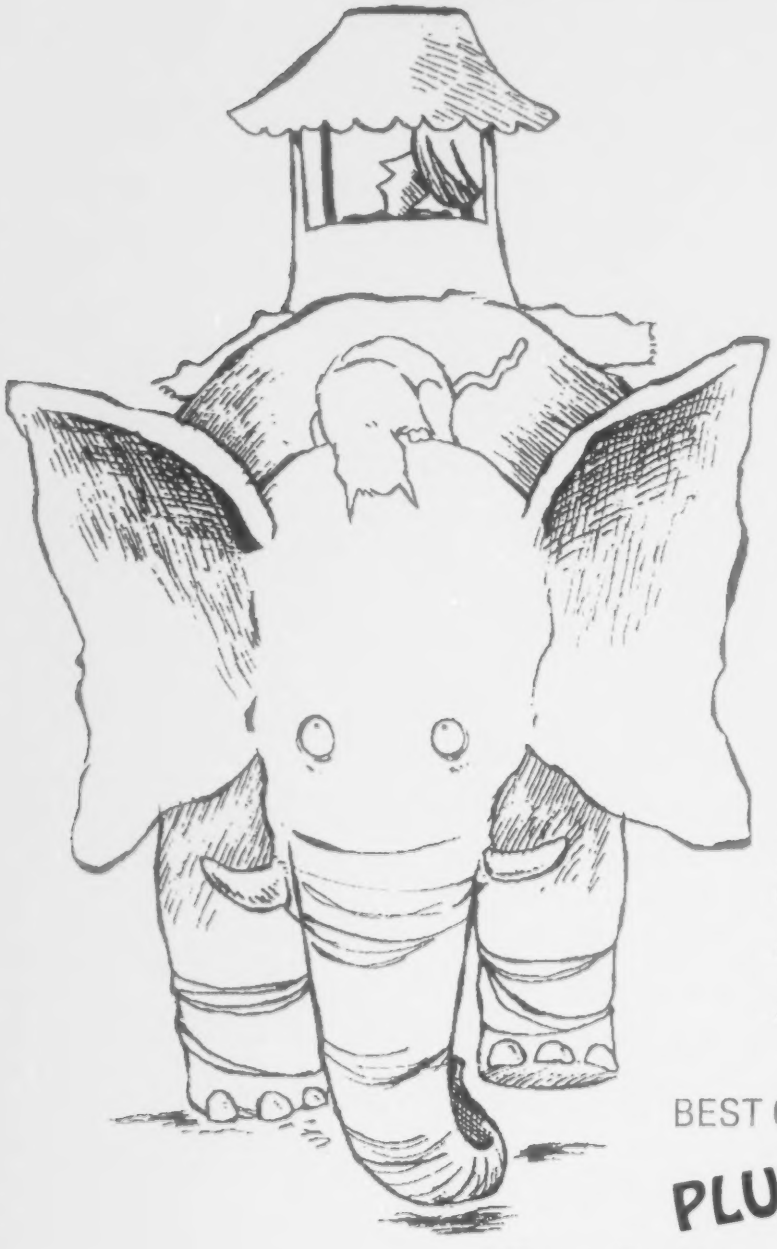
This book, one of a series, discusses how parents can help children by working with the school. The message of this series of books urges parents and children to spend time together, talk about stories, and learn together. The first part of each book presents stories appropriate for varying grade levels, both younger children and those in grades three and four, and each book presents stories on a particular theme. The Read-along Stories in the book are: "The Key into Winter" (Janet S. Anderson); and "Loaf of Bread" (retold by B.K. Sharma and Sharon Pugh). On an accompanying audiotape, the stories are performed as radio dramas, allowing children to read along. The second half of each book provides ideas and guidelines for parents, as well as activities and books for additional reading. Sections in this book are: Working with the School; Parents' Questions about School; The Parent as Model: Early Learning; and Books for Parents and Children. Suggestions include ways to create a relationship with the school that is beneficial to children, ways to become involved, questions to ask, ways to support the school in educating children with disabilities, and activities for skill development. Contains 28 references. (EF)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Parents and Children Together SERIES

WORKING WITH THE SCHOOL

ED 452 536



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PLUS

Read-along Stories:

The Key into Winter

Loaf of Bread

CS 217 396

Guidance and fun for parents and children, ages 4–9

This book has a companion audio tape also entitled "Working with the School." Occasionally there are directions on the tape that do not appear in the book or headings in the book that aren't spoken on the tape.

Parents and Children Together SERIES
Published by **ERIC** Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication
and ***The Family Learning Association***
3925 Hagan St., Suite 101, Bloomington, IN 47401
1-800-759-4723 ● www.kidscanlearn.com

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Getting Started 5

Part I

Read-along Stories 7

The Key into Winter 9

by Janet S. Anderson

Loaf of Bread 29

retold by B.K. Sharma and Sharon Pugh

Part II

Guidelines for Parents 47

Working with the School 48

Parents' Questions about School 56

The Parent as Model: Early Learning 69

Books for Parents and Children 75

Published by
ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication
Indiana University, 2805 East 10th Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47408-2698
Carl B. Smith, Director
and
The Family Learning Association
3925 Hagan Street, Suite 101
Bloomington, IN 47401

Copyright ©2001 by The Family Learning Association

Copy Editor: Wendy Hodina
Production Editor: Lanny Thomas

ERIC (an acronym for **E**ducational **R**esources **I**nformation **C**enter) is a national network of 16 clearinghouses, each of which is responsible for building the ERIC database by identifying and abstracting various educational resources, including research reports, curriculum guides, conference papers, journal articles, and government reports. The Clearinghouse on **R**eading, **E**nglish, and **C**ommunication (ERIC/REC) collects educational information specifically related to reading, English, journalism, speech, and theater at all levels. ERIC/REC also covers interdisciplinary areas such as media studies, reading and writing technology, mass communication, language arts, critical thinking, literature, and many aspects of literacy.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-99-CO-0028. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Introduction

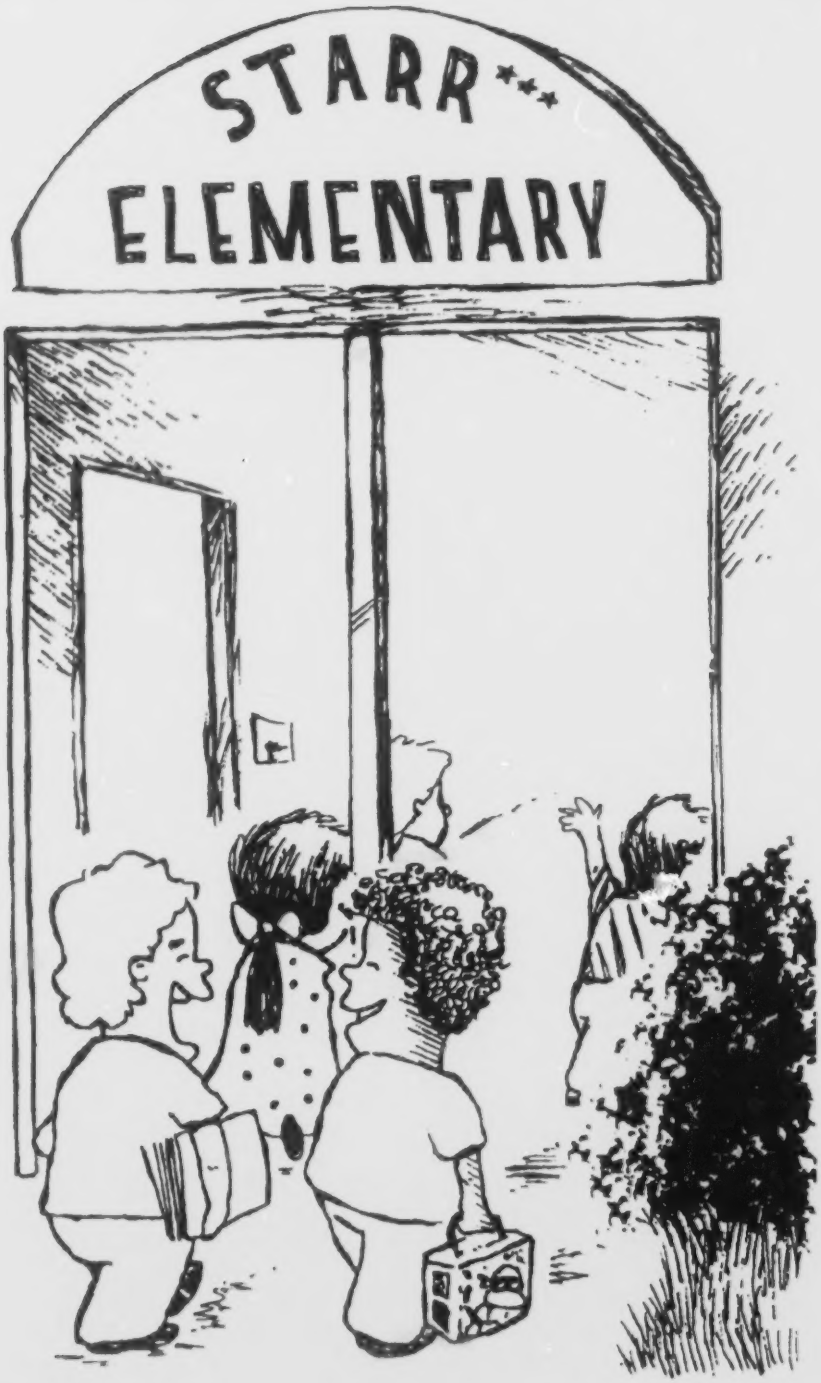
Get together with your children. Talk about stories and learn together. That's the message of this series of books, ***Parents and Children Together***.

You will find here several stories that you and your children can read together and talk about in a relaxed way. Some stories are more appropriate for younger children, some for children in grades three and four. Have fun with them but also use them as a way of guiding your child's thinking.

Before each story, you will be prompted to focus your attention. After the story, review some of the issues in a relaxed conversation. Please feel comfortable in making comments or asking questions when the two of you are reading a story together. Have fun along the way. The stories are performed as radio dramas on the accompanying audiotape. That gives your child a chance to read along with the voices on the tape.

In the second half of this book and on one side of the audio tape there are ideas and guidelines for the interested parent. On the topic of this particular volume you will find hints, practice activities, and books for further reading. If you want to use the tape as a way of preparing for reading with your child or in helping your child study, the tape gives you an opportunity to listen while you are driving or jogging.

For more ideas on any of the topics in this Series, visit ***www.kidscanlearn.com*** or ***http://eric.indiana.edu***


STARR
ELEMENTARY

Getting Started

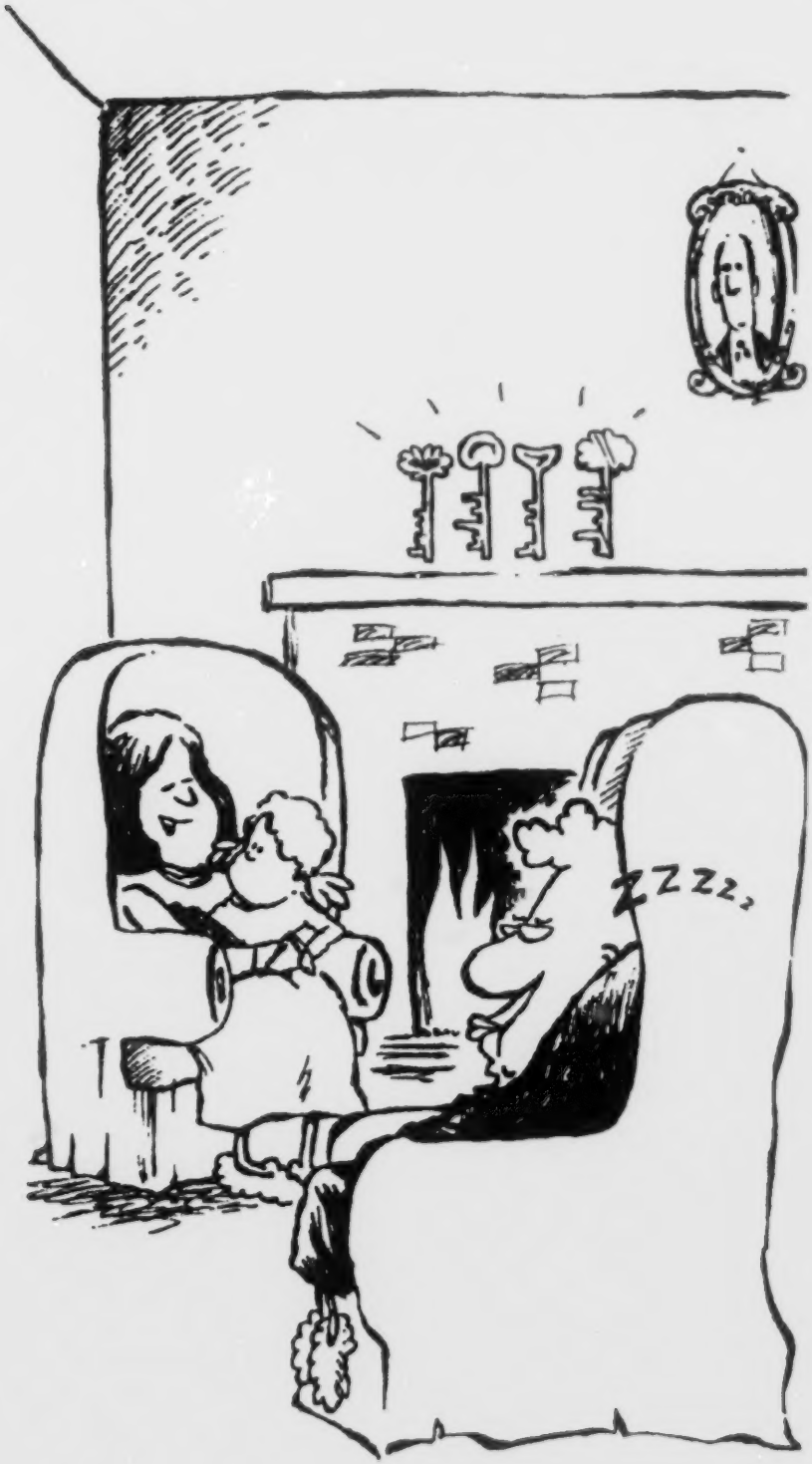
As parents, we want to do everything we can to help our children get a good education. In this book we discuss how parents can help their children by working with the school.

On Side B of the tape we have two read-along stories. We encourage you to listen to these stories and to read them with your children so you can participate in the excitement of story reading. Of course, your child can listen to the stories alone, if you wish.

Before reading each story, talk about the title or the things that might happen in the story. Then, after the story is finished, talk about it again. By the way, if in the middle of the story something funny or interesting happens, it's O.K. to stop the tape and discuss the event, or ask your child questions such as "What things are fun to do in winter?" or "What is your favorite animal?" and then follow it up with a why or why not. These discussions make your conversation about the story more natural and more valuable.

Part I

Read-along Stories


ZZZz,

The Key into Winter

by Janet S. Anderson

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

In many parts of the world, the change of seasons brings different kinds of weather to people's lives. This is especially true in much of the United States. How do seasons change where you live? Talk about the different things you have to do during each of the four seasons to stay comfortable. Which season do you like best? Why?

"Tell me, Mama," said Clara. "Tell me again about the time you hid the key into winter." She settled more snugly into her mother's lap. Her grandmother was dozing in a big chair beside her.

As she felt her mother's arms tighten around her, Clara looked up. Above the hearth hung four keys. The first was the key into spring, and it was made of silver, delicate and shining. The second was the key into summer, and it was gold, gleaming and heavy. The third was the key into autumn, and its copper shone with a fiery glow. The last was the key into winter. All the light of the room burned in its crystal depths.

"Tell me again how you almost lost it forever," said Clara.

"Again?" said her mother. But she smiled and, gazing into the fire's depths, began her old story. "It happened long ago, when I was very young."

"Younger than me?" said Clara.

"Younger than you," said her mother. "But even then, the keys hung over the hearth as they do today. I loved to look at them. And every season when my mother took one down, she let me hold it for a moment in my hand."

"How did it feel?" said Clara.

"You tell me," said her mother.

Clara shut her eyes to think. "The key into

spring feels cool at first and then warms in your hand. The key into summer is hot, but it doesn't hurt. The key into autumn..."

"My favorite," said her mother.

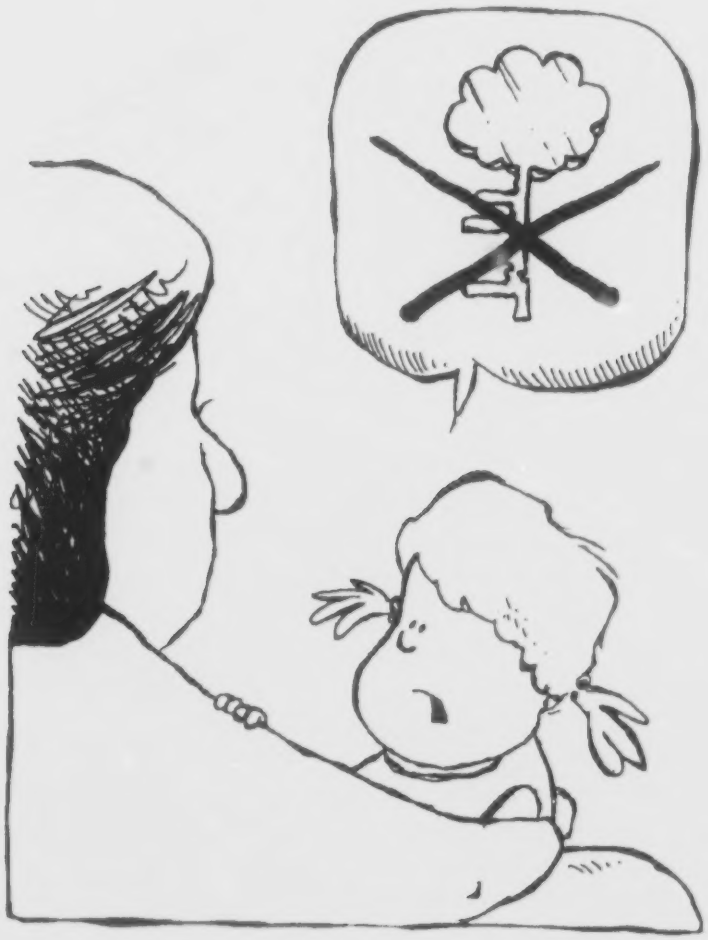
"Not mine," said Clara. "It's like a shock, like sparks that glow and then disappear into the dark."

"And the key into winter?" said her mother. Clara shivered. "It burns with cold down to my bones. I don't like it, Mama."

"I didn't like it, either," said her mother. "And one year, I decided I would hide it so that it would never be winter again."

"Tell me, Mama," said Clara.

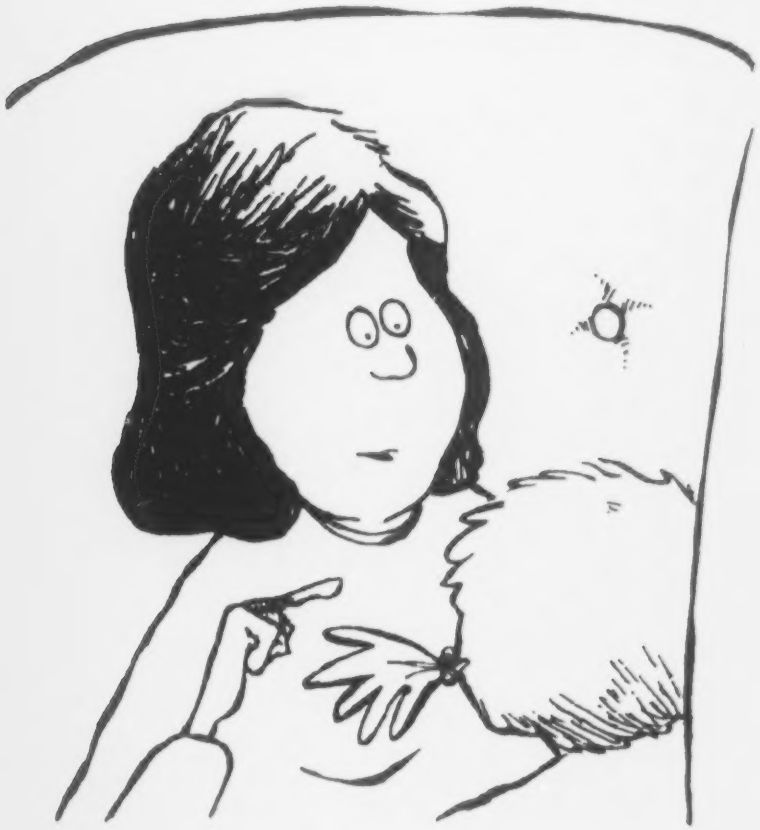
And her mother told her.



"It was a beautiful autumn. The trees glowed even by moonlight. The barn was filled with the rich harvest: golden corn, yellow squash, orange pumpkins, red apples...everything was bursting with color. It should have been a season of joy.

"But instead, we were sad. My grandmother lay thin and quiet in her upstairs room. She still smiled, but she could no longer laugh or tell me the stories I loved to hear. The doctor would just shake his head and say, 'There's not much I can do. Her body is old and tired. I'm afraid that this autumn will be her last.'

"Her last! But I loved her! There must be a way to save her!

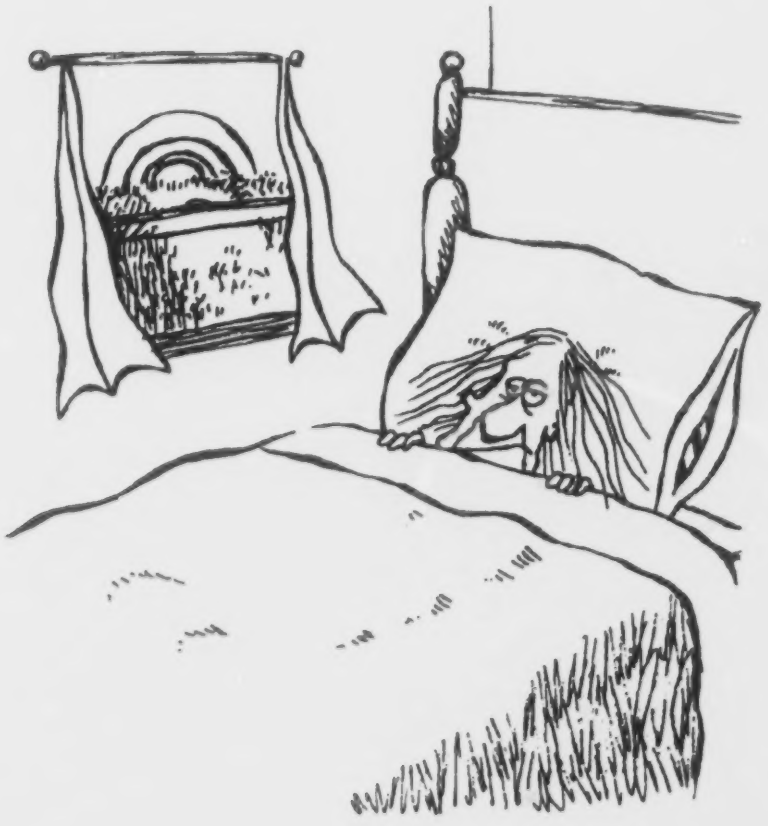


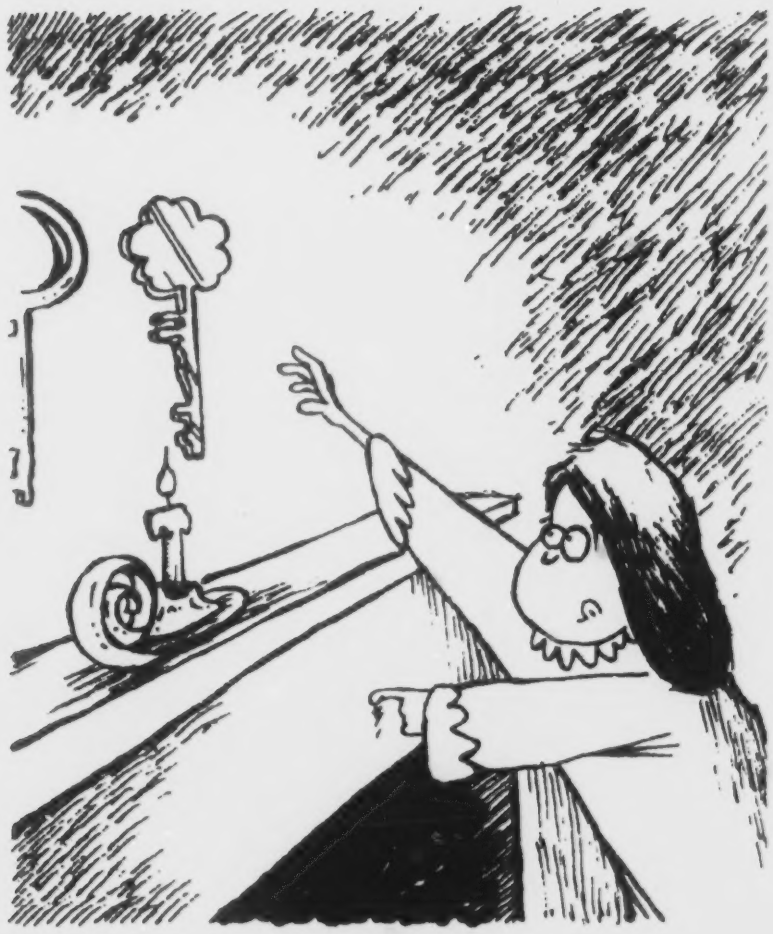
"Well, there was. It was easy. My mother could just stop the autumn from ending by keeping the winter from beginning. But when I asked her, she shook her head. 'Winter must come,' she said.

" 'Please,' I begged her. 'Just don't use that ugly key into winter. Then autumn will stay, and Grandmother will stay. She'll laugh and tell me stories again.'

"But my mother just repeated her words. 'Winter must come,' she said, and that was all she would say.

"The days passed. Each night the dark came earlier. Each morning my grandmother seemed weaker. What could I do? One morning I stared up at the key waiting coldly over the hearth. Only one night remained before it would lock us out of one season and into another. There was no more time to lose.





"That night when everyone slept, I crept downstairs. Quietly I pulled the stool over to the hearth. Careful of the Christmas candles, I stretched high on my toes to reach the key. It burned like cold fire in my hand. Wrapping it in a fold of my nightgown, I stumbled into the kitchen.

"A few minutes later, I was back in bed. I shivered for a long time, partly from cold, partly from fear. But I didn't care. I had done it. I had saved my grandmother.

"The next morning when I came downstairs, my mother said nothing. But her face was paler than usual, and in her hands she held a Christmas ornament from our tree.

"The tree! Why, it was nearly bare, and the tall white candles from the mantel were lying in a heap on the floor.

"'Why are you taking down Christmas?' I asked.

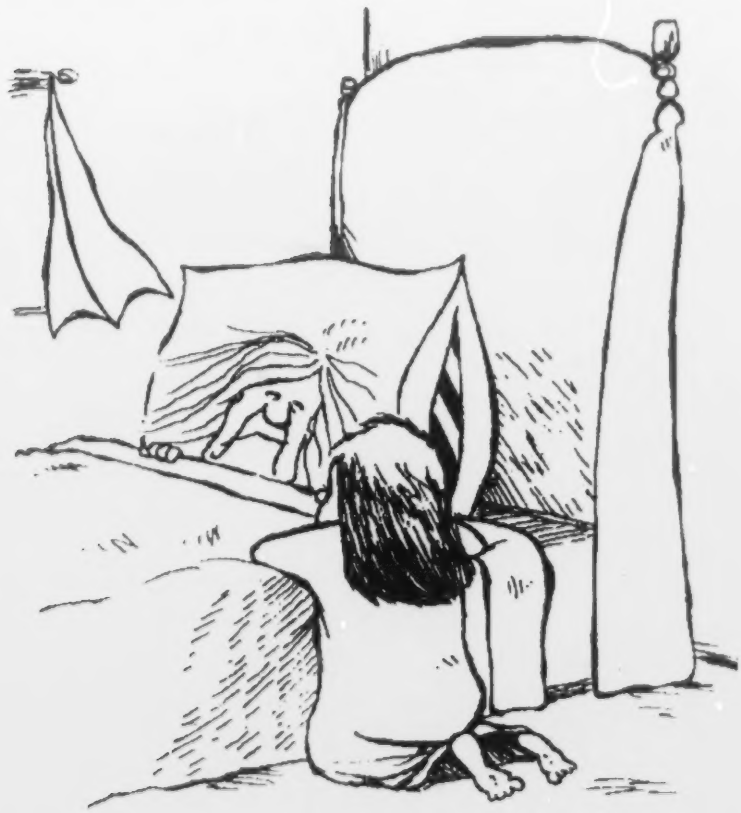
"'The key into winter is gone,' she said. 'Without winter, there can be no Christmas.'

"I ran outside. The sleds and the ice skates pulled out weeks earlier by my impatient brothers were gone. My youngest brother was leaning against the barn. 'I want snow,' he was sobbing. 'I want Christmas. I want winter.'

"Inside the barn stood my father and my grandfather. They were looking at the plow and the bags of seed corn and at the wooden buckets for collecting sap from our old maples. 'A terrible thing,' my grandfather was saying. 'No winter, no spring.'

"'No summer,' said my father. 'No harvest. A terrible thing.' " Frantic, I ran back inside. I ran up to my grandmother's room and knelt down beside her bed. 'It's not a terrible thing, is it?' I whispered to her. 'Who cares about Christmas? With no winter, you'll soon be well again, won't you? Won't you?'

"But my grandmother barely opened her eyes. Her whisper was very weak. 'No winter? No reason, then, to wait for spring.' And she closed



her eyes again.

"'Mama!' I screamed, and she was immediately beside me.

"'She's asleep,' she said. 'It's all right.'

"'Mama,' I cried. 'Can't you bring spring now?' I tugged her down the stairs and pointed up at the silvery key. 'Please take it down. Turn it. That's what Grandmother is waiting for. She's waiting for the

spring to make her well.'

"'Listen to me,' said my mother. 'The key alone won't work. The key would unlock the door, yes, but only winter can open it. Only winter can open the door into spring.'

"'I hid the key, mama,' I said quietly. 'I hid the key into winter.'

"'I know,' she said.

"'I hid it in the stove,' I sobbed. 'It's melted now, I'm sure it is.'

"'Show me,' said my mother.

"Together we went into the kitchen. I opened the door of the stove. There, deep among the flames, was a glowing shape. With her long tongs, my mother reached in and pulled it out. 'It didn't melt,' I whispered, surprised.

"'Don't touch it,' said my mother. 'Its cold now would freeze your blood itself.' She looked at me gravely. 'And now what shall I do with it, with this

key into winter?'

"I scrunched my eyes shut. 'Is tonight the night?' I finally asked.

"'Tonight is the night,' she said.

"'Winter must come?'

"'You tell me.'

"I thought of my grandmother and wiped my tear-streaked face. 'I guess only winter can open the

door into spring,' I said.

"Late that night as we all gathered in front of the hearth, my father gently carried my grandmother down the stairs. She looked up at the familiar keys and smiled faintly. Then she opened her hand. My mother placed the crystal key into it, and together they turned the key into winter."

For a moment, Clara and her mother sat silent. Then Clara brushed a tear from her own cheek. "Was it her last autumn?"

"Yes," said her mother. "But she lived to see

another spring."

Clara looked over at the big chair on the other side of the hearth. "Grandmother?" she whispered.

The old woman opened her eyes, then stretched her fingers and reached for her knitting. She pointed one long needle at the four shining keys. "It'll be a long time before you get to turn them, Clara. You or your mother. Come here now and get

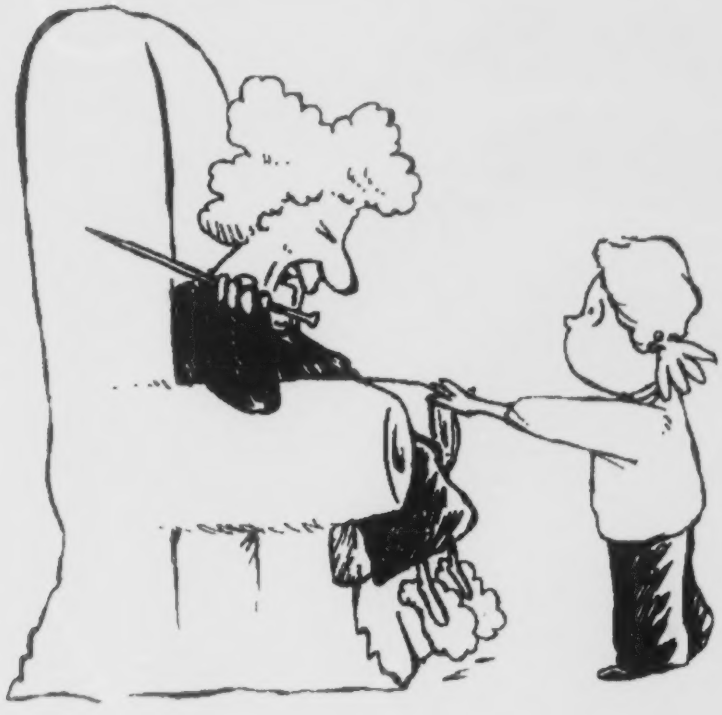
on with this wool for me."

As Clara's mother went into the kitchen, Clara settled on a stool beside her grandmother, and the old woman handed her the wool. Then her fingers closed around Clara's. "So you don't want summer to end, eh, child?" she said. "No more playing and swimming, just school and work?" She gave a low

laugh. "When I was your age, I felt the same way."

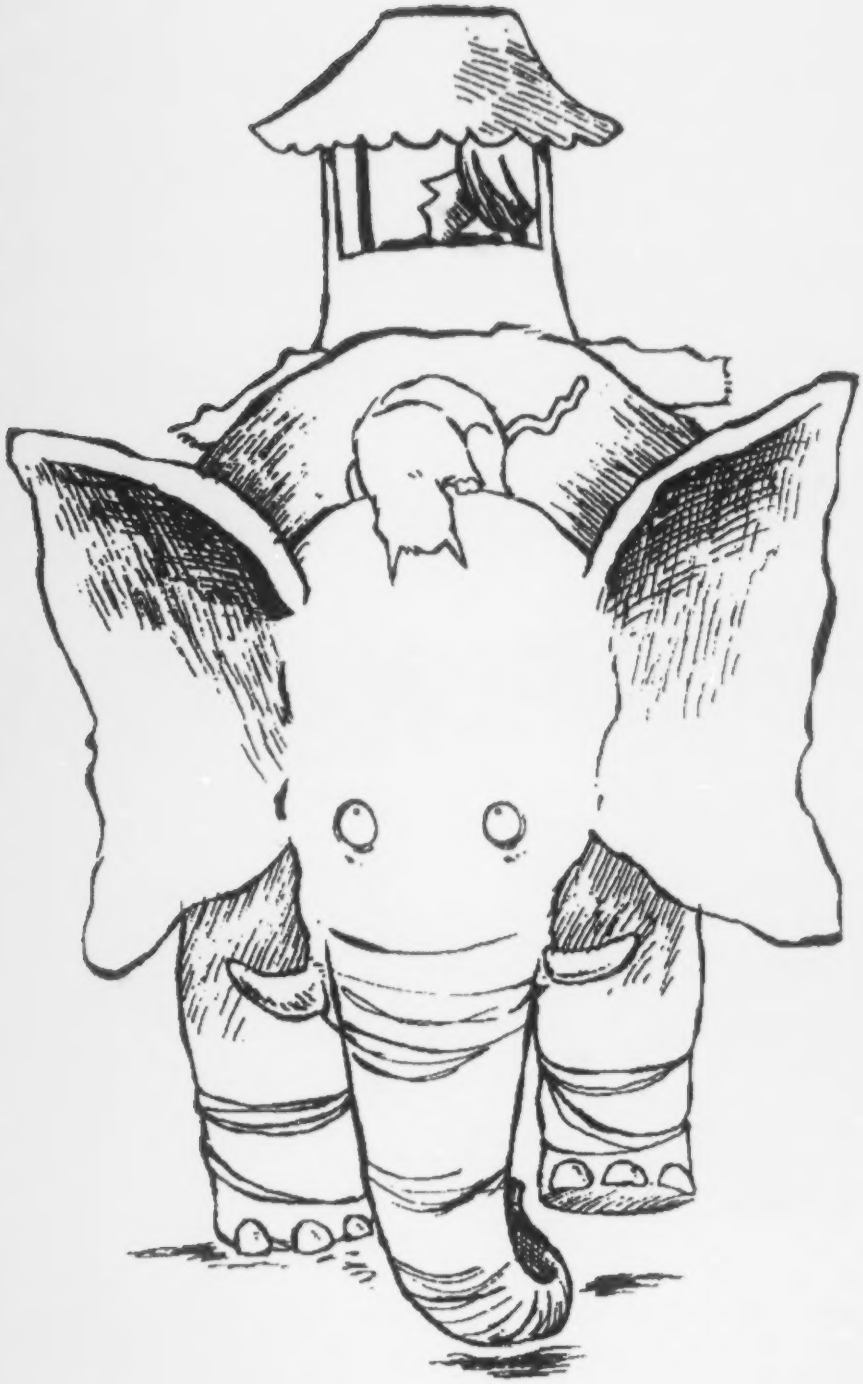
"You?" asked Clara, astonished. "You did?"

"Yes," said her grandmother. "Now, get on with this wool, and I'll tell you about he time I almost lost the key into autumn."



Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Clara's mother hid the key into winter because she believed her grandmother would keep living if she did so. Talk about some other stories or movies where people try to change the course of history by interfering with it in some way.



Loaf of Bread

Retold by B. K. Sharma and Sharon L. Pugh

Things to Do *before* Reading the Story

In many cultures of the world people believe in "reincarnation" or "rebirth." This means that they believe in people and even animals coming back to life in new bodies after they die. Share your ideas about what you think happens after a person dies. As you read the story, think about what might have happened to the characters if they had been reborn as people or as some other animal instead of cats.

Once upon a time two old cats lived in a small village in India, far from the big city, which they had never seen. These cats were the best of friends and spent many a long evening entertaining each other, and anyone else who cared to listen, with tales of their younger days.

"Yes," said Subash, who was the same shade of yellow as a lion, "I have ridden on the head of the Maharajah's elephant, the first to see the crowds gathered for miles on end to admire us."

"Very impressive," replied Mukhtar, who had stripes like a tiger. "But I must tell you that I have sat by the fires of the Holy men on the highest mountain, where great secrets were revealed to me."

And so they would go on, weaving grander and grander stories about where they had been and what they had done.

Oddly enough, the villagers, who were greatly amused by these tales, couldn't remember a single day when the two cats had not been right there in the village. Every evening they sat with the people, telling stories and waiting for the bits of food that always came their way. Indeed, both were so fat and lazy that it was hard to imagine them climbing to either the head of an elephant or the top of a mountain. But that didn't matter, because the villagers were always happy to listen to the stories and share their food with lion-colored Subash and tiger-striped Mukhtar.

"These cats are certainly imaginative," the villagers often said. "Surely we are lucky to have the cleverest animals in all of India."

But one day things changed. A musician came into town, a man who played beautiful music on a sitar and had with him a monkey that danced gracefully to the melodies, turning and bowing as he collected coins in a tin cup. Evening after evening, the people gathered around the pair, admiring the playing and dancing, and dropping coins into the monkey's cup.

Now Subash and Mukhtar were silent as they too joined the crowd. They had never seen such an animal, twirling on two feet and holding a cup like a person. One evening, after the people had gone home, the cats decided to approach the monkey and find out more about how he had gained his skills.

The monkey, whose name was Babu, saw the cats coming from a distance. Observing their plump bodies and sleek fur, he knew that it had been a long time since they had tested themselves in the world. "Hello," said Babu, when the cats came near. "Please come closer. Hmmmm. Yes. Now I can see what kind of animals you are."

"Well, yes," Subash said. "Obviously we are cats."

"Yes, indeed," said Babu, "but not ordinary cats."

"No?" answered Mukhtar, who was inclined to agree though he wasn't sure why. "Why do you say that?"

"Step into that beam of moonlight," said Babu, motioning the cats to a spot where the light of the full moon broke through the trees. "There. Yes, I can see clearly that you are not ordinary cats at all."

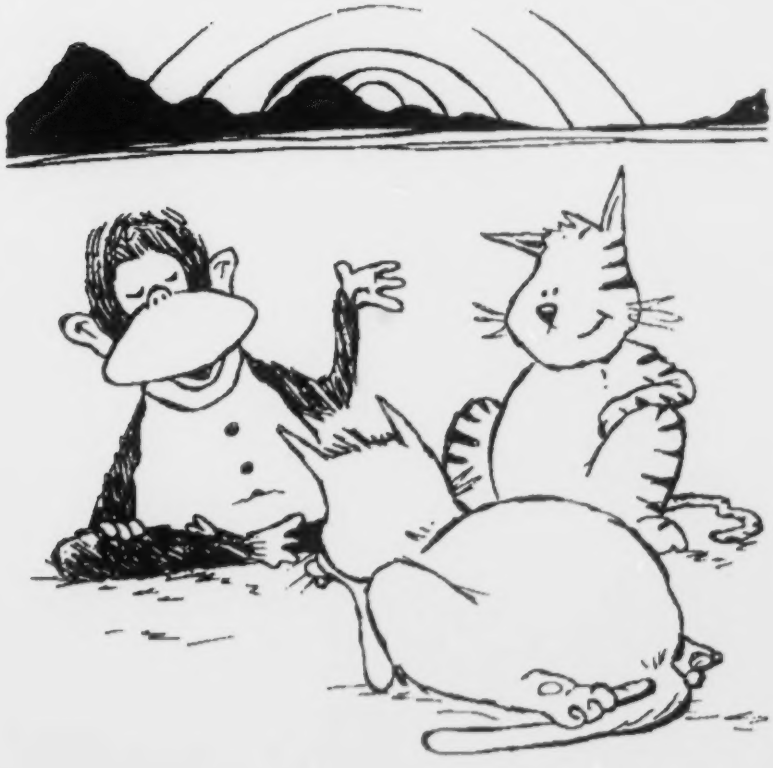
The cats looked down at themselves. Seeing their fur shine in the moonlight, they couldn't help admiring themselves.

"You," said Babu to Subash, "you were a lion in your past life." Subash looked back in astonishment. Yes, that must be right. It explained why he was such a fine, powerful, adventuresome beast.

"And you," said Babu to Mukhtar, "you were a tiger." And Mukhtar wondered why he hadn't thought of that himself since it was so clearly true.

Now the cats came closer, amazed at Babu's wisdom, and wanted to know what he had been in his past life that made him so clever in this one.

"Well," laughed Babu, "since I guessed your past lives correctly, you have to guess mine." And the cats agreed that this was fair. Then for the rest of the night they sat and listened to Babu's stories of



life with his master in the city. They had never heard of such a place or of the many interesting things that Babu described there. By the time the sun was peeking over the horizon in the east, they were sure that Babu was the wisest and cleverest animal in all of India.

That summer, a great drought came to the land. For weeks and months, no rain fell, and the crops did not grow. Now the people had to be careful with the little food they had stored, and they no longer could give extra scraps to the animals. Babu, of course, had little difficulty, since he could scamper

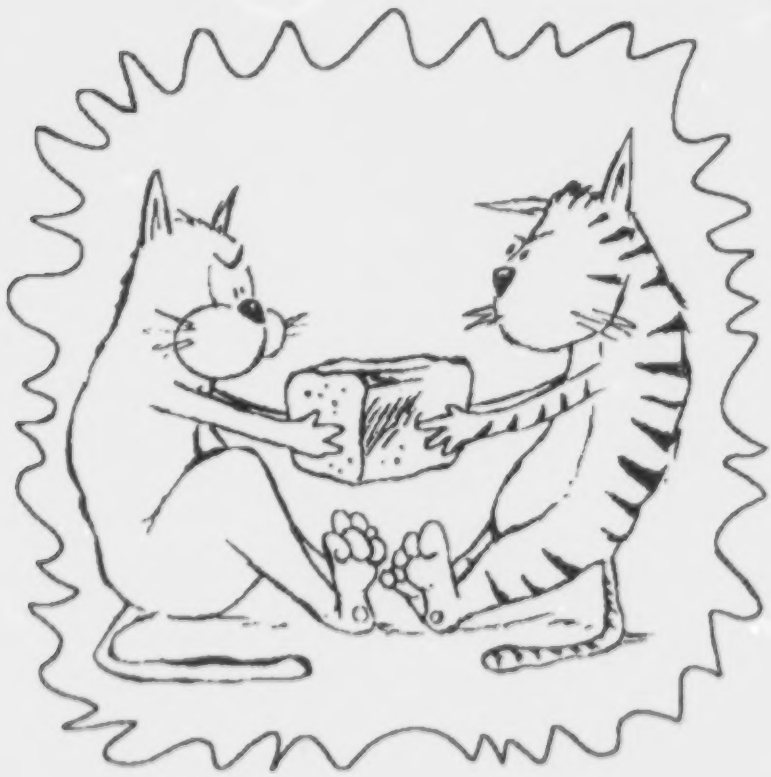
up into trees and find fruits and coconuts growing there. But Subash and Mukhtar were not so lucky. It had been a long time since they had found their own food. They were so accustomed to the food that people gave them that they didn't like what they could find for themselves.

Life grew more and more difficult. The cats spent most of their time looking for any little scrap of food and found barely enough to stay alive. But while they grew hungrier every day, they were still cheered up by the thought that, in their past lives, one had been a lion and the other a tiger. Now their stories went back to those imagined times. "I remember when I was hardly more than a cub, the hunters almost caught me, but I was brave..." Subash would begin. And when it was his turn, Mukhtar would say, "I still remember the days I spent in the woodlands of the king..." And as their bodies grew thinner, their imaginations swelled.

One day as they were going along together, looking for food, they found a small loaf of bread that had fallen from a traveler's pack. Pouncing upon it, they both put their paws on it at the same time.

"It's mine," claimed Mukhtar. "I saw it first. Give it to me, and I'll share a bit of it with you."

"What do you mean?" answered Subash, "I saw it first. I'll take the loaf and give you a bit." And neither would take his paws off the bread for a moment.



"Tigers before lions!" shouted Mukhtar. "In my past life I was the royal animal."

"No way!" yelled Subash back. "Lions are kings, and that's what I was in my past life."

For a moment it seemed as if they would have a terrific battle. But then they stopped, remembering their great friendship and many happy hours telling stories together. They decided to call Babu, the cleverest animal in the jungle, and let him decide who should have the loaf of bread.

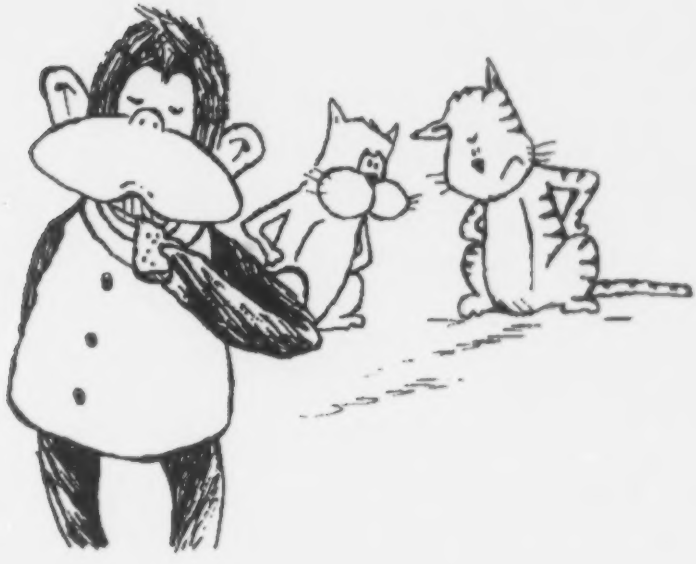
Now Babu had been spending his time in the trees, eating his mangoes, bananas, and coconuts, but it had been a long time since he had tasted bread. When he heard the cats calling he scampered over and saw the lovely loaf of bread still on the ground between them.

"Babu, Babu," called Subash and Mukhtar. "Help us. We have found this loaf of bread, but we can't agree on whose it is." Babu listened to their story and the claim each made that he had been the first to see the bread. But while he was listening, his mouth watered at the sight of the fresh brown loaf.

"Well," said Babu. "This is indeed a dilemma. But I think I know the solution. Wait here." The cats waited, both still holding onto the bread, until Babu came back with a set of scales.

"Here," he said, "I'll divide the bread between you. And to be absolutely sure that each gets the same share, I'll use this set of scales." Both cats thought that that was indeed a brilliant solution. Who but Babu, the wise monkey, would have thought of it? They handed the loaf over to him, and he pulled it into two pieces. But when he had put a piece on each side of the scales, they saw that the left-hand balance was lower than the right one.

"No problem," said Babu, "I can fix that." And he picked up the left-hand piece of bread, took a bite of it, and put it back. Now, alas, the right-hand balance was lower. "Oh, dear," said Babu. "I took a little too much, but don't worry." And he picked up the right-hand piece of bread and took a bite. But when he put it back, now the left-hand balance was lower again.

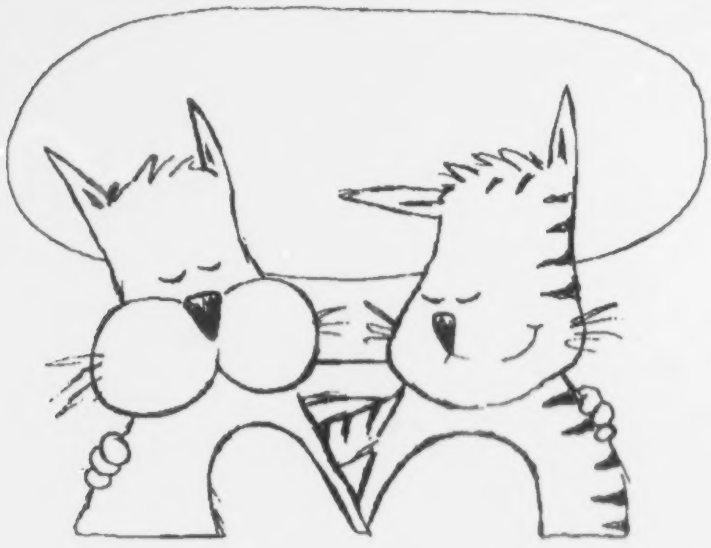


And so it went. While the two cats stared, turning their heads back and forth, Babu took a bite first from one piece of bread and then from the other. And then, when there was only a morsel left on each side of the scales, Mukhtar suddenly shouted, "Stop," and snatched the piece from the right side, and Subash snatched the piece from the left. Now, at last, the sales were empty and perfectly balanced.

"There," said Babu. "Now the problem is solved." And he hurried away, leaving the cats to eat the remaining bits of bread.

"Well," said Mukhtar as they walked sadly away. "I think Babu was a magician in a former life."

"Yes," said Subash, "Either that or a thief." And the two friends agreed that from then on they would stick together and solve their own problems, instead of quarreling and taking their troubles to someone else.



Things to Do *after* Reading the Story

Have you ever been fooled by someone like the cats that were tricked by the monkey in the story? How did you act when you found out you had been fooled? Talk about what can happen after you trick someone and get away with it. What are some other ways that the cats could have solved their problem besides asking for the monkey's help?

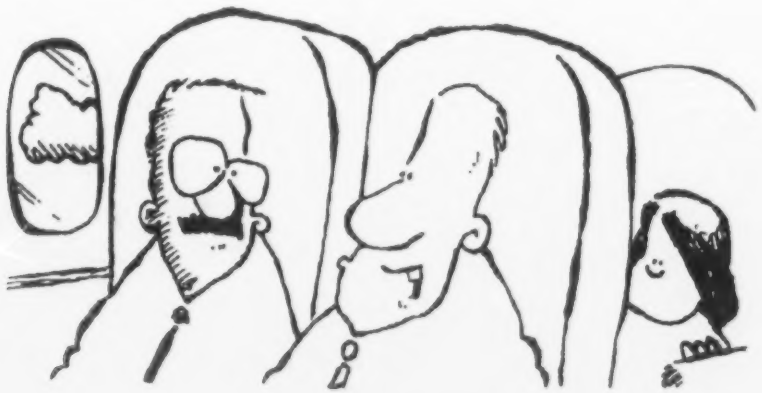
We hope you have had fun with these stories!

Part II

Guidelines for Parents

Working with the School

We hear lots of talk these days about parent involvement in schools and in their children's education. In fact, the phrase "parent involvement" is used so often that it's worth asking just what it means.



Recently, while flying to a meeting, I told the person sitting next to me that I wrote articles for a parent magazine. He immediately started talking about his children and his concern about their education. He said that some of his friends were teaching their children at home and were not sending them to school. He and his wife were not going to set up their own home school. But they were interested in how they could work with their local school to give their children the tools they needed to succeed in life.

What a wonderful, positive attitude this man had about parent involvement! He wanted to work with the school to help his children gain the information, skills, and creative expression they needed to succeed as learners and responsible citizens. I think that's an excellent definition of parent involvement. It suggests that parents should focus on their children's learning and share decisions and responsibilities with teachers and other school personnel.

By concentrating on what your children are learning, you have something to discuss at parent-teacher conferences. Besides the general question of whether or not they are doing OK, you can ask specifically what they are able to do as readers, writers, scientists, and mathematicians. Since you share with the school the responsibility of helping your children make progress and develop a positive attitude toward learning, you and the teacher need to talk about specific plans that will help your children achieve these goals.

Your efforts to carry out a plan for your children usually center around homework and a place for home study. The need for regular study time, a place to study away from TV and other distractions, and help from parents must be etched in our brains. We can't lose sight of the value of homework in individual learning. Showing interest in your children's school work and helping them at home contributes significantly to their success in school. Researcher Joyce Melton has found that parents' daily interest in school and school learning contributes more to children's success than does simply participating in conferences or volunteering to work at school.

Of course, volunteering to work at school or in your child's classroom is a beneficial way for you to get involved. Whether you work on a PTO project or tutor children at school, once you are there, you have easy access to the teachers, principals, and counselors who can also help you with your own child's education.

Parent involvement may also include becoming an advocate for your child and for other children in the school. This may mean that you take an individual complaint to the principal to set up legal channels for protecting the interests of a group of children. Thus your attention to these problems helps schools focus attention on these children. For example, there may be a group of families who don't speak English well and for whom the school needs a policy change to help their children succeed in school.

Another aspect of this picture is your own education. Because we are always discovering new things about how children learn, we are regularly adjusting the school curriculum to meet new needs, such as drug and AIDS education. By going to information meetings, seminars, and health demonstrations, you may become better informed about the techniques that schools now use. This kind of information can guide you in assisting your own children.

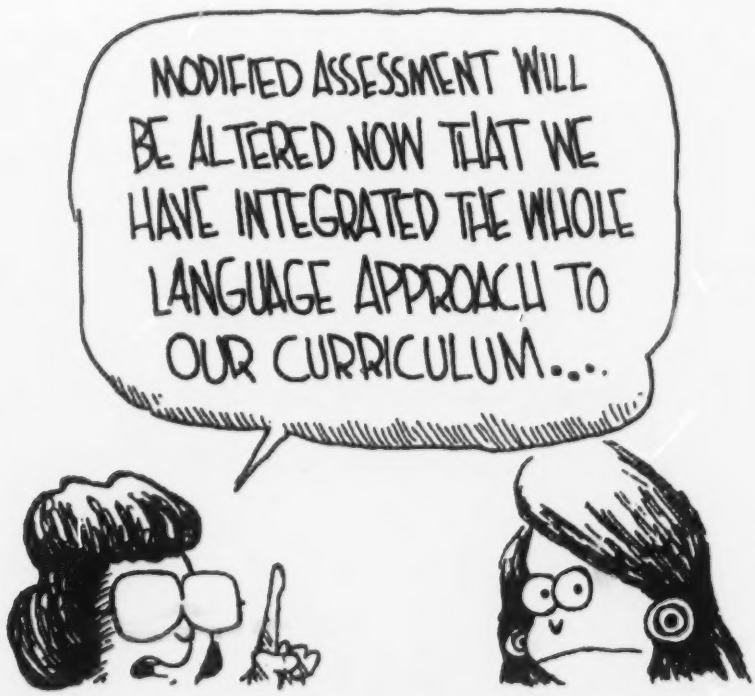
Your interest has benefits. From various studies of parent involvement in education we know that parental concern improves children's school achievement and self-esteem. Just having Mom or Dad show an interest in their world gives children a boost, a sense of importance.

Parents also help themselves. Working together with school personnel improves parents' self-worth—perhaps because they acquire useful skills that can be used with their children and because they begin to realize how valuable they are to their children.

At any rate, when it comes to parent involvement, "just do it," as one ad campaign tells us. Your kids will benefit, you will benefit, and the school will be a better place for children because one more adult has contributed to its mission. A couple of years ago, I had the pleasure of visiting twenty-three highly successful schools. One common factor in each was a high degree of parent involvement.

What should you do? Here are some things you can do to make sure your relationship with your child's school will help her:

1. Focus your discussions on your child, not on the teacher or school. How can we work together to benefit the child?
2. Include the principal and school counselor when your child needs their attention, too.
3. Insist that teachers and other school personnel talk everyday language. If someone uses educational jargon, ask for an explanation that you can understand.

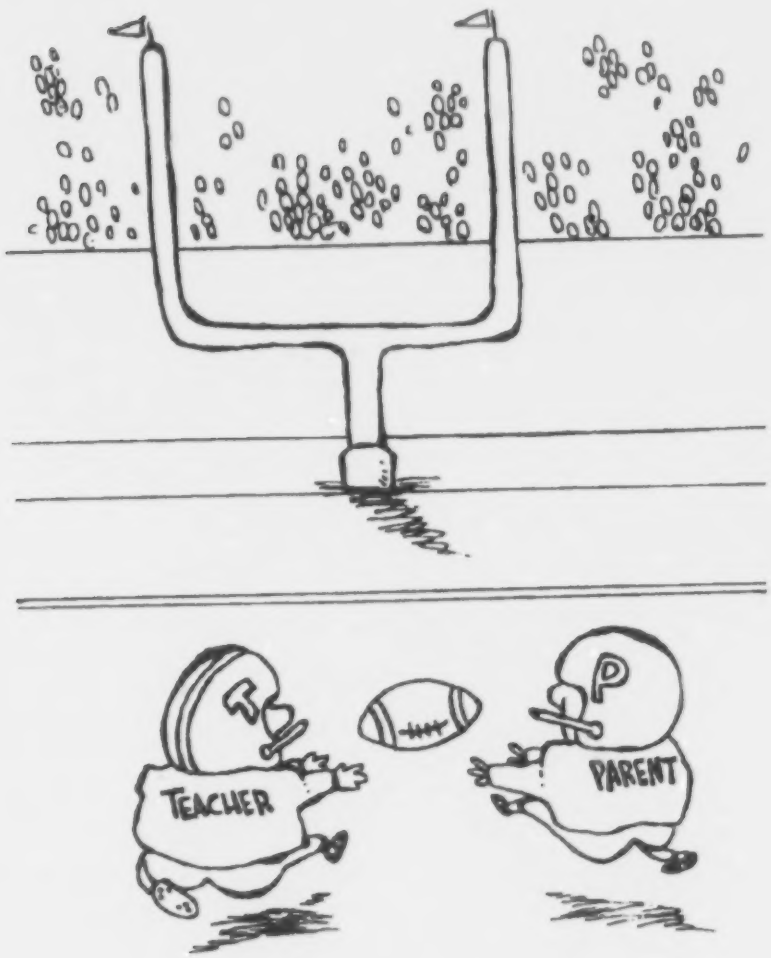


4. Share your first-hand experiences about your child and her needs.

5. By all means, disagree with a teacher's comments if your experience counters what he or she says. Create a dialogue about your child.
6. Let your child know that you will work at home to support efforts started in the classroom. You and the teacher will work together to help your child achieve success. Don't engage in "teacher bashing."

7. Build a collaborative attitude between yourself and the school. When you think of school personnel who can help you with your child, remember that there are many people who will work with you—principal, counselor, nurse, social worker, coach, music teacher, and so on. Get to know them, and ask for their assistance when it's needed.

8. If your child has a problem at school, sometimes a conflict between you and school professionals may arise. Take the attitude that you can negotiate your differences because you both have the goal of improving your child's education.



These suggestions will make relationships between you and the school, you and your child, and your child and the school, beneficial to all involved.

Parents' Questions about School

Parents often ask questions about interactions with the school. Here are some examples:

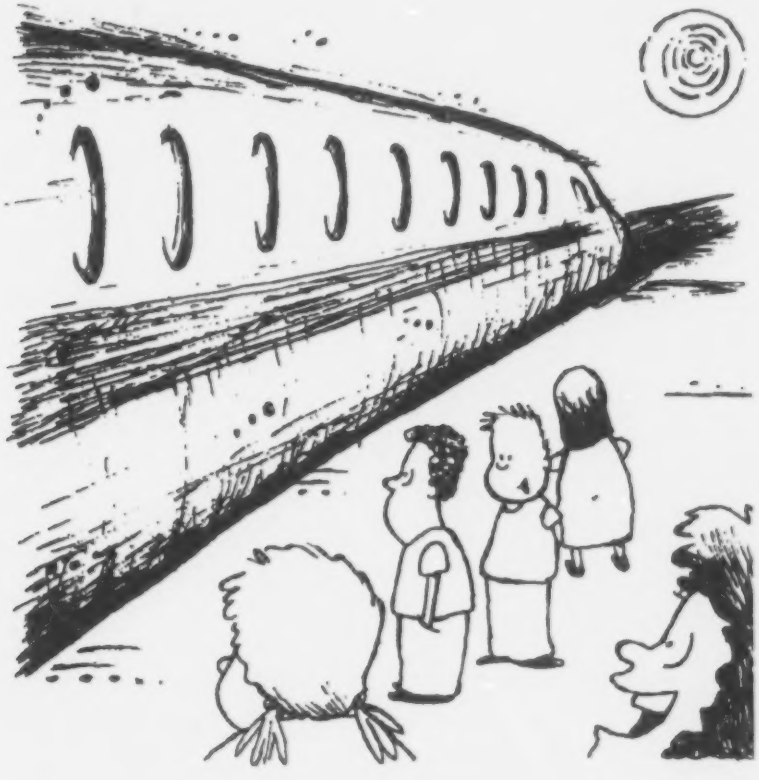
> **I'm a single-parent father. Do you have any suggestions for me and other parents like myself who would like to volunteer to do things at school, but find it difficult because of work schedules?**

Even though you are very busy, there are still ways you can participate in school. One father I know uses his personal holiday one day a year to help in his son's class. He eats lunch with his son and spends the afternoon watching and helping in the class.

Young children feel honored when a parent visits their classroom to help. Some companies establish close relationships with schools in their community and encourage home-school communication by allowing parents time off to attend parent-teacher conferences.

Some schools invite parents for lunch. They set aside certain days of the month when parents can join their children at school for lunch. Notices are sent home reminding parents of the dates. Parents must notify the school ahead of time so that the cafeteria can prepare extra lunches. Check your school's lunch policy. If it doesn't offer such an invitation, it might be that the idea never occurred to school officials. Perhaps you could get a parents' lunch day started.

Parents can volunteer to talk to a class about their jobs, special interests, or hobbies. A parent of one of my students worked for a railroad. We were studying a unit on transportation, so on his visit to school he talked about trains, their design, how they have changed over the years, and how they benefit our state. He discussed train safety and involved the children in a lively discussion. Later, he arranged a field trip for us to visit the train depot where he



worked. There are details about every job that would prove interesting to curious young minds. Check with your child's teacher to see if you can share your interests and expertise with his class.

There are many activities going on outside the classroom that support the school. For example, banquets, plays, carnivals, book fairs, sports, and other events are organized by teacher and parent groups. The principal's office can help you find an activity that best suits your schedule and interests. Remember that parent involvement doesn't always mean being visible in the school. Helping your child at home with school work, taking time to read aloud, and doing other school-related activities are important contributions to your child's education. Many teachers ask parents to spend time each evening working on math or reading with their child. This may be the best way to show your support.

I don't like to attend parent-teacher conferences. I usually sign up for a conference time and then don't show up. Are parent-teacher conferences really that important?

Psychologist James Comer says that to get the best education, children need to have a team behind them. At a minimum, this team is made up of parents and teachers working together. Children who are well behaved and working on grade level need this team support just as much as those with learning difficulties, those who are unmotivated, or those who lack self-discipline.

Perhaps you back out of school conferences because you lack the self-confidence to face a teacher about your child. It may seem silly to you, but it is a good idea to dress up for a conference like you would if you were going to work in an office. Dressing like a professional may add to your self-confidence.

It is also a good idea for both parents to attend the conference. If you are divorced or separated, of course, this may not be possible. When both parents go to the conference they act as a team and support one another on important issues.

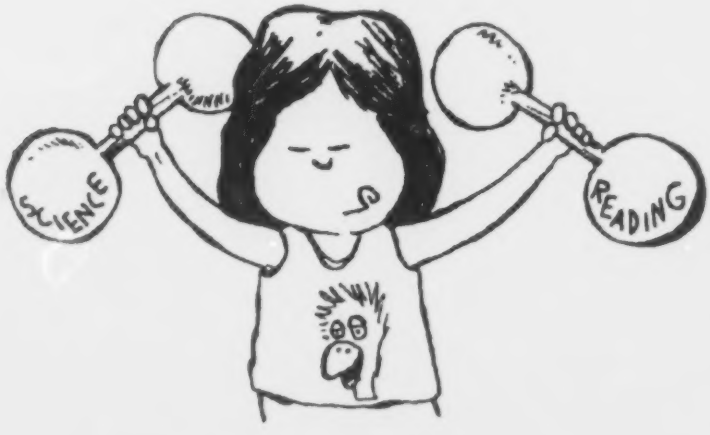
Go into the conference with a written list of questions and concerns. The teacher will appreciate your interest and preparation. Don't be afraid to ask a lot of questions. This is your child's education you're talking about. Press the teacher for ways in which you can all work together to benefit your child.

I always go to my children's parent-teacher conferences, but feel very uneasy and "draw a blank" when their teachers ask if I have any questions. Do you have any advice for an interested, but nervous, parent?

School conferences are great ways for parents and teachers to learn more about children. You can make your conference more successful if you do some "homework" first. Many of us are better at asking questions when we think in advance of what we want to ask.

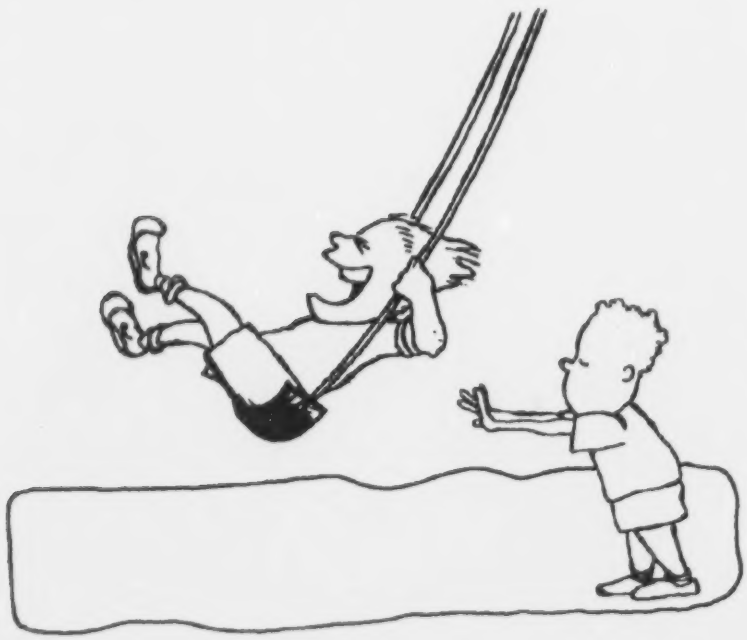
Here are some questions you may want answered:

- What are my child's strengths and weaknesses?



- What are my child's work habits like?
- Does my child need extra help in any subject?
- Are there things we can do at home to help her?

- Is my child making normal progress in reading? In math?
- Does my child complete homework regularly?



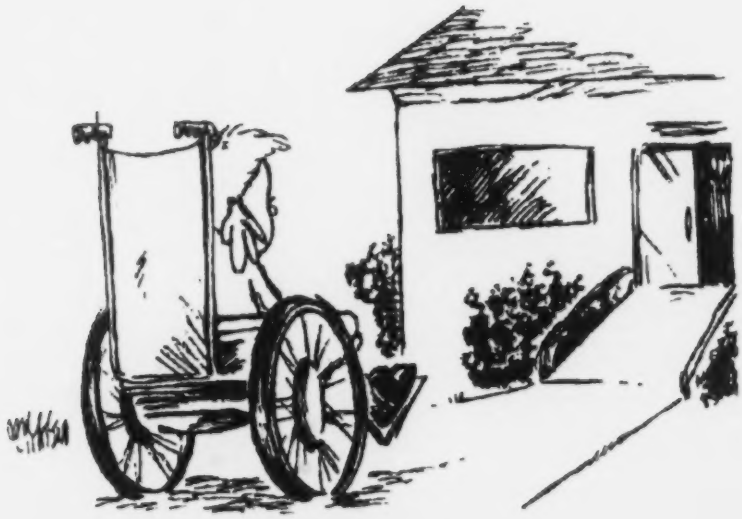
- How does my child relate to other children? To other adults?

Besides asking about your child's schoolwork, you need to share information that can help the teacher know and understand your child. Be sure to tell the teacher about health needs, your child's interests, or any changes in your home or family that affect your child's learning. **The most important thing to remember about a conference is to attend it.** Just by being there you show the teacher and your child that you are interested in their work. That goes a long way toward building a cooperative spirit among you.

How can I develop good communication with my children's teachers?

The most important point to remember in developing an open line of communication with your children's teacher is don't wait for the first conference. Find time within the first couple of weeks of school to meet your children's teachers. If you have any special concerns, make sure teachers are aware of them. Perhaps your child has vision or hearing problems that require special seating. Make sure your child's teacher is aware of his special needs.

Let teachers know where you can be reached during the day, and that you would appreciate being contacted should problems arise. From that point on, whenever you sense that your child is having a problem in school, call her teacher immediately. When parent-teacher conference time arrives, there should be no surprises.



My son has attended a school for handicapped children. This year he will be going to a public school and will be mainstreamed into the regular classroom. We want this to be a positive experience. What can we do to support the school's efforts in this situation?

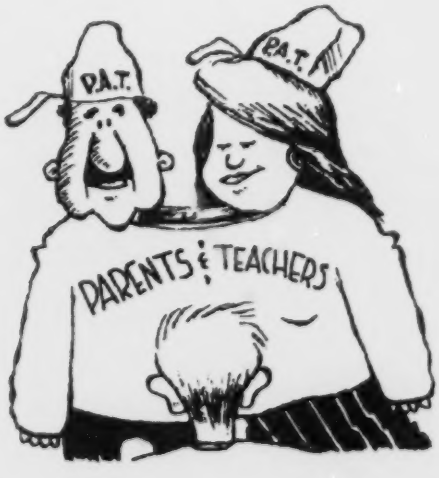
Become an educated parent. Find out all you can about the nature of your child's disability and how it affects school performance. Ask teachers and other professionals for reading material, and go to the public library for information. This will help you avoid making unrealistic demands for academic achievement on both your child and his teacher.

Have realistic expectations about what the school can and cannot do. Join a parent support group or parent-teacher organization that will help you determine if the school is effective in helping your child. There may also be a national organization linking families concerned about a particular handicap. Such organizations are excellent sources of information and support.

Work closely with your child's teacher. Being in a regular classroom is a new experience for your child. Keep in close touch with the teacher, and see how you can help. Make sure you understand the terminology your child's teacher uses to describe your child's unique needs. Oftentimes such terms are clear to teachers, who use them frequently, but not clear to parents. Don't be afraid to ask questions, to request a further explanation, or even to seek another opinion.

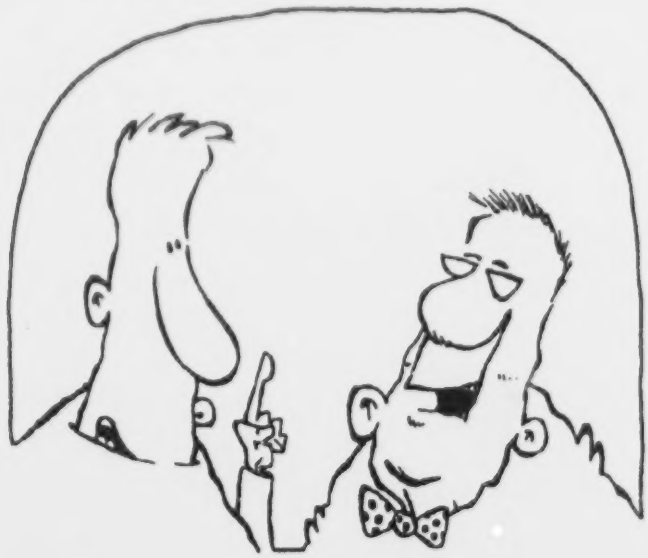
Don't assume the school can do everything without your assistance. Find out what the school is doing and what strategies are being used. Perhaps there are things you can do at home that will reinforce school activities. Keeping in close contact strengthens the parent-teacher team. If you are having a problem with your child at home, alert the school. Teachers or school officials may have suggestions to make, and can tell you if the problem is interfering with school performance. If possible, keep a positive attitude. It will help your child.

If a teacher contacts you about problems he is having with your child, try not to be defensive. First, listen to his side of the story. No matter how difficult



this might seem, think of it as an opportunity to share information and ideas. When you show that you are concerned with what a teacher or administrator is saying, he will be more willing to listen when you have the floor. When a problem arises, suggest a meeting so you can address the problem together. Face-to-face discussions are much more effective than trying to solve problems over the telephone.

Speaking positively about school or the teacher fosters a respectful attitude in your child, and can contribute to healthy school performance. A feeling of mutual respect and commitment between parent and teacher helps your child.



Contact the school frequently. Don't wait until a problem becomes serious before contacting the school. If your child seems unhappy or frustrated, contact the school immediately. Alert the teacher to problems you feel are significant. Many times minor problems can be solved before they reach crisis proportions if home and school have open lines of communication.

Take advantage of the invitations your school extends. Attend back-to-school night, parent-teacher conferences, and other school-related activities. Get together with other parents at PTO meetings or other parent support groups. Knowing what goes on at school can extend and enrich your child's school performance.

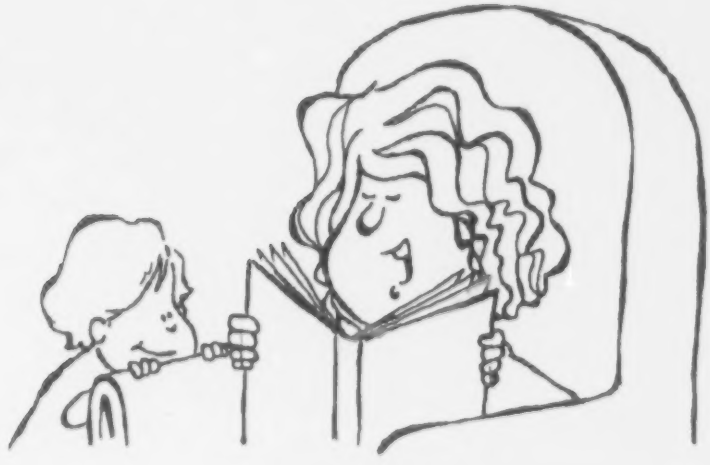
Try not to get angry if you find that the school does not include you in making decisions about your child to the degree that you want. Anger often turns off those people who are in a position to help. Instead restate clearly that the best approach to educating your child is if each party knows what the other is doing. This way neither parent nor teacher works against the other's efforts.

The Parent as Model: Early Learning

Amy Kindred-Pierce, a former elementary teacher, suggests some activities that parents can use to help their children in early learning.

Parents can make a real difference in helping their children form a lifelong love of learning through the process of modeling. When asked to recall their first memories of learning to read, most adults describe sitting on a relative's lap to share the funnies, or listening intently as mom or dad read to them at bedtime. As toddlers, we all learned to speak by mimicking the language around us. Our first attempts at writing involved scribbling on paper, making marks that were attempts to write like mom or dad. In all of these instances of early learning, the common thread is the knowledge acquired through observation of others in natural settings. This is where our self-confidence was nurtured.

All children enjoy having someone read to them. Choose high-quality picture books, predictable stories, poetry, and both non-fiction and fictional titles. When you read, read with feeling. Show enthusiasm for the exciting parts and compassion for characters who are troubled. Share your feelings with your child about parts of the story that strike his fancy. Be an active listener who shows an interest in what your child says by nodding and responding naturally to his comments. Your child is capable of having in-depth discussions if you allow him to express himself freely and openly.



As they enter school, children are required to become capable in various areas. They are often tested in the areas of color recognition, coloring within the lines, cutting and pasting, recalling the alphabet, and counting to 100. Parents can help their kids at home by reviewing and practicing with them in an open, accepting environment. The following activities are suggested to help your child develop her abilities in these areas:

Color recognition

- When unloading groceries, talk about the colors of fruits and vegetables. Look for colors in printed materials. Go for a walk and discuss colors in the environment. Allow your child opportunities to work with crayons, colored pencils, brushes, and markers. Model coloring and painting by using these materials yourself. Print the color words and have your child imitate you.

Coloring within the lines

- Take a few minutes to sit down with your youngster. Pick up a crayon and color the funnies or scribble on a piece of paper and fill in the shapes you make. Share with your child a page from her coloring book. By participating, you are modeling, but most of all you are making time to talk and share in a natural setting. Don't be too critical.

Cutting and pasting

- Have your child help you cut out coupons or clip recipes. Have on hand a container filled with a bottle of glue, scissors, paper, and crayons. If you prefer to keep messes outside, that's fine. In fact, go for nature hunts and return home to construct and create art projects using items found in your backyard. The best investment I ever made was in a vinyl cloth-backed tablecloth. Relax with your child and make something too. The best learning experiences come from sharing, not from critical evaluation of the finished piece.

Recollection of the alphabet

- While reading in the car or bus with your youngster, search for letters on signs and billboards. Labels on food items such as cereal or soup are another area to explore when teaching your child the letters of the alphabet. When looking for a book at the library, read aloud the letters as you search for an author or title.

Counting to 100

- Children love to sing, so make up songs or use traditional ones to model counting. After reading a story, go back with your child and count certain letters, such as the number of *O*s or *M*s or the number of animals in a picture.

  Share the change in your pocket or purse with your child. Allow him to count out the money with you when you make a purchase. Children and adults learn better when activities have a purpose.

As parents, we should be aware that our own learning never ceases. We ourselves have learned largely through our mistakes and successes while modeling others. Children need to have the same opportunity to take risks, to make guesses, to be accepted for their strengths and weaknesses, and to feel good about themselves.

Continue to make time to communicate with your child. When learning at school is coupled with modeling, encouragement, and reinforcement at home, your child will more easily attain her maximum learning potential.

Books for Parents and Children

On the following pages we have put together lists of books for parents and children. We encourage you to take time to read a few of these books with your child, and talk about some of the characters in the stories.

Books for Parents

Empowering Your Child by D. Fred Bateman (Hampton Roads). Shows parents how to create a home environment that will stimulate their children's academic development and help them succeed in school. Deals with topics such as reading, trust, self-esteem, responsibility, discipline, family relationships, and study habits.

Staying Back by Janice Hale Hobby. Presents the stories of seven children who repeated a grade, and later became successful students. Also gives guidance for parents trying to support their children through this experience.

I Hate School! Some Commonsense Answers for Parents Who Wonder Why by Jim Grant. Discusses school readiness, failure and retention, and developmental placement. Gives examples of signals children send when they need help.

Helping Your Child Achieve in School by Dr. Barbara Johnson. Deals with motivation, reading, testing, and beginning school. Also covers parents and teachers as partners, gifted children, and computers.

Books to Read Together

Ages 4-6

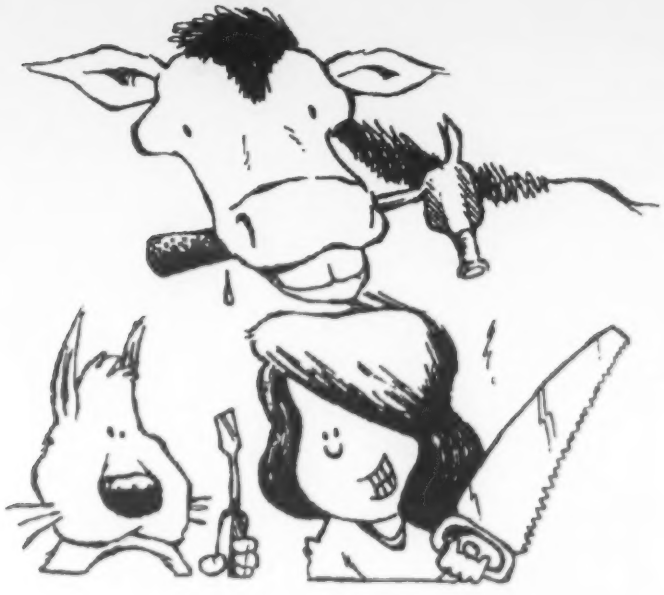
Simon's Book by Henrick Drescher. Simon is trapped on a piece of paper—with a monster. He must figure out a way to save himself by using pens and an ink bottle.

Pigs by Robert Munsch. Megan is told to feed the pigs, but *not* to open the gate. She opens the gate, and the rowdy pigs overrun her home and school. Megan must figure out a way to trick the pigs and get them back in their pen.

The Present by Michael Emberley. Arne can't decide which birthday present would be best for his nephew—a pocketknife that he really wants to keep for himself or a bicycle. When Arne arrives, his nephew unknowingly helps him make the best choice.

Ages 6-8

Benjamin & The Pillow Saga by Stephane Poulin. Benjamin has the magical gift of humming sweet soft music into pillows that give people who sleep on them a deep, delicious sleep. When he leaves his job at the pillow factory to hum at an opera house, the company's pillows lose their magic. Then Benjamin thinks of a clever way to fill people's pillows with music again.



Annie & Co. by David McPhail. Annie sets out with her cat and horse to fix whatever she finds that is broken. With a little luck, some good friends, and lots of imagination, she finds she can fix almost anything.

Roxaboxen by Alice McLerran. Roxa-boxen was a special place; it was always there, waiting. Visit this magical world of fantasy created through the imagination of children by joining the author as she reflects upon her childhood memories.

Ages 8-10

The Cricket in Times Square by George Selden. When Chester the cricket arrives in New York from Connecticut, he quickly makes friends with Harry the cat and Tucker the mouse. They have lots of fun and lively adventures, and help a young boy bring money to his family's newsstand.

Skateboard Tough by Matt Christopher. Brett discovers a buried skateboard, "The Lizard," and suddenly his skateboarding skills improve. His friends wonder if the board is haunted, and Brett wants to find out who buried it and why.

Making Movies by Perry Schwartz. Look behind the scenes and find out how a movie is made. Presents the stages of film production, from the idea all the way through to the advertising.

Books for Your Children to Read by Themselves

Ages 4-6

More First Words Every Day by Margaret Miller. Shows words children use in their daily routines. Each word appears along with a photograph of a child portraying the action represented.

Truck by Donald Crews. Follow a big, red truck from the loading dock to its destination. Shows through pictures different kinds of trucks and the places they go.

Yellow Ball by Molly Bang. A yellow ball is lost in the sea during a game. Watch the ball drift over the waves and sail ashore to find a new home.

Ages 6-8

Mister Momboo's Hat by Ralph Leemis. A hat belongs on your head. Mister Momboo puts his hat on, but then the wind takes it on an adventure of its own. Finally the hat comes back and ends up as a nest for a family of robins.

The Journey Home by Alson Lester. Wild and Woolly dig a hole in their sand pit, fall through it, and land at the North Pole. As they journey back home they go to many enchanted places and meet lots of unique people.

Tar Beach by Faith Ringgold. Cassie has a dream: to be free to go wherever she wants. One night, up on "tar beach", the rooftop of her apartment building, her dream comes true and she flies all over the city.

Ages 8-10

Rosebud and Red Flannel by Ethel Pochocki. Rosebud is a snobbish, lacy nightgown who thinks she is too good to converse with the likes of Red Flannel, a pair of woolen longjohns. They are blown off the clothesline in a winter storm and as they travel together, they find true love.

The Even Treasure Hunts by Betsy Byars. Jackson and Goat take turns hiding and hunting secret treasures. Goat's older sister, Rachel, does her best to foil their latest expedition.

The Great American Baseball Card Flipping, Trading, and Bubble Gum Book by Brendan C. Boyd and Fred C. Harris. Presents over two hundred baseball cards with biographies for each. Includes commentary on trading, hoarding, and collecting baseball cards.

Magazines

Also ask the librarian for the following magazines for children:

Cricket

Highlights for Children

Jack and Jill

Let's Find Out

Scholastic Action Magazine

YES Magazine

Editor: Michael Shermis
Editorial Assistant: Melinda McClain
Writers: Carl B. Smith, Marge Simic, Melinda McClain, and Richard Stewart
Editorial Staff: Eleanor Macfarlane and Richard Stewart
Original Production: Lauren Bongiani
Cartoonist: Dave Coverly
Story Selection Committee: Kathy Burdick, Kim Faurot, Hester Hemmling, Maggie Chase, and Brian Sturm

Audio Producer: Michael Shermis
Studio Engineer: Rick Wudell
Voices in Order of Appearance:

Side A: Joy Kahn and Dave Mac

Side B: Instructions by Joy Kahn

"The Key into Winter"

Narrator:	Rich Fish
Clara:	Aimee Frye
Mother:	Hester Hemmerling
Grandmother:	Rich Fish

"The Lunch Box"

Narrator:	Rich Fish
Subash:	Brian Sturm
Mukhtar:	Warren Lewis
Babu:	Rich Fish

Studio: LodesTone Productions, 611 Empire Mill Rd., Bloomington, IN 47401

Duplicating: Duplicating Plus, 611 Empire Mill Rd., Bloomington, IN 47401

"The Key into Winter" first appeared in Cricket v 17 n1, and is used by permission of the author, Janet S. Anderson.

Parents and Children Together SERIES

Speaking and Listening
Learning Science at Home
Success with Test-Taking
Helping with Homework
Working with the School
Stress and School Performance
Making Writing Meaningful
Using the Library
Making History Come Alive
Folktales for Family Fun

- **Practical Guidelines for Parents**
- **Delightful Read-along Stories for Children**

ERIC
Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication

For a complete list of more than 20 titles in the **Parents and Children Together SERIES**, please call us or visit our website.

87

FAMILY LEARNING ASSOCIATION

1-800-759-4723
www.kidscanlearn.com

ISBN 1-883790-79-4
9 781883 790790 90000>